FINAL Terms of Reference
Northern East Slopes Sustainable Resource and Environmental Management Strategy
March 30, 2000

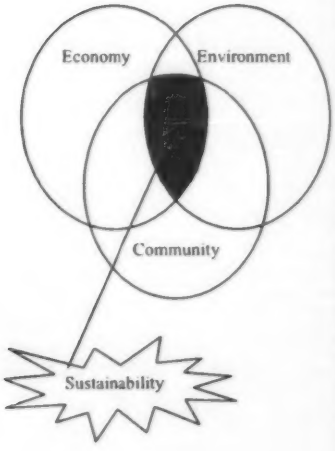
INTRODUCTION

> *"To effectively integrate resource management, we need to look at large areas ... and deal with large-scale issues such as biodiversity, airsheds, forest fire regimes and the resource dependence of a regional economy" (Doug Radke, Deputy Minister, Alberta Environment, December 1999).*

In March of 1999, the Alberta Government stated its commitment to the wise management of Alberta's natural resources and environment for the benefit of all Alberta's present and future generations; in the Commitment to Sustainable Resource and Environmental Management. The Vision of Sustainable Development for Alberta as stated in the March 1999 Commitment to Sustainable Resource and Environmental Management policy is set out below.

"Alberta, a member of the global community, is a leader in sustainable development, ensuring a healthy environment, a healthy economy, and a high quality of life in the present and future."

"Integrated Resource Management is based on cooperation, communication, consideration of all values and consultation before action. It recognizes that everything is connected to everything else." (Doug Radke, Deputy Minister of Alberta Environment). The Commitment to Sustainable Resource and Environmental Management states that "regional plans will provide a level of detail between provincial policy and operational decision making". Regional plans are at a scale of 1:250,000.



The government departments accountable for ensuring the commitment is achieved are Alberta Environment; Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development; Alberta Resource Development; and Alberta Economic Development. The Regional Environmental Resource Committees (ERCs) are responsible for leading and implementing the Alberta commitment initiative at the regional level.

Building upon other provincial experiences in Integrated Resource Management (IRM), the following terms of reference will provide a blueprint for action to develop a Northern East Slopes Sustainable Resource and Environmental Management Strategy (NES Strategy). The development of the NES Strategy will consider existing planning policy (i.e., Eastern Slopes Policy). Additionally, the NES Strategy will maintain a seamless link to incorporate ongoing regional development, regional research and resource management initiatives (i.e., Foothills Model Forest, Caribou Cumulative Effects, etc).

STRATEGY PRODUCTS/OUTCOMES

The products of the NES Strategy will include:

- A regional vision with goals and indicators, that outlines desired sustainable resource use and considers economy, environment, community and aboriginal interests.
- The identification, prioritization and analysis of values, issues and concerns in realizing our regional sustainable resource management vision.
- Strategies to achieve the goals and to resolve outstanding issues and concerns.
- A process to monitor, evaluate, report and improve the NES Strategy.

> *"You need to be aware of your neighbour and other industries' needs and concerns."*
> *(Peter Aschenmeier, Chairman NES Land and Forest Service Grazing Advisory Committee, November 1999)*

Some of the desired outcomes of the NES Strategy include:

- Enhanced communication and co-operation among industries, communities, government and aboriginal people;
- Clear strategic direction for managing resources in the region;
- Improved management of cumulative effects;
- Better understanding of the relationships between economic, environment, and community interest that are important for decision making within the region.
- Efficient, effective and consistent land management decisions, approvals and referrals;
- Identification of sub-regional and local planning priorities;
- Increased certainty with respect to the development of the region's natural resources;
- Community concerns are considered in resource development and environmental management decisions.

TIMEFRAME

An interim report, outlining the regional vision, goals, indicators, prioritized concerns, and required actions will be completed by December 31, 2000. This preliminary version of the Strategy will include an identification of critical and immediate issues, and action plans for their resolution, based on fast-tracked analysis and consultation. The subsequent consolidated Strategy document, completed in the spring of 2002, will additionally contain comprehensive strategies for a wider range of issues based on more extensive analysis and consultation.

A proposed workplan and budget for the 2000/2001 fiscal year will be developed by April 2000. The interim report will finalize the budget for the 2001/2002 fiscal year.

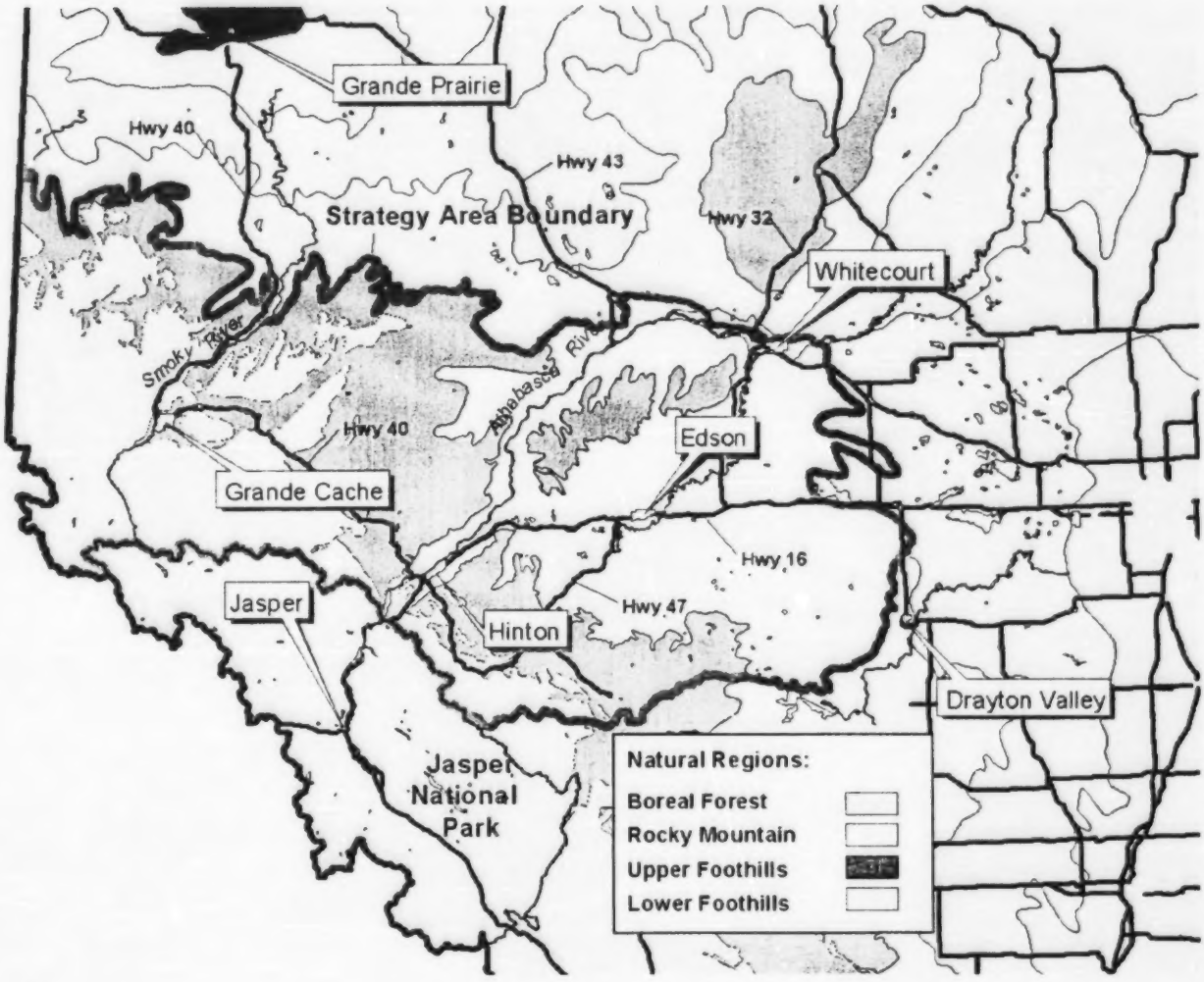
REGIONAL STRATEGY BOUNDARY

The NES Strategy area, as shown on the attached map, will include portions of the Athabasca and Smoky River watersheds in Alberta. At a more detailed scale, the study boundary will include:

- The Smoky River watershed within the Rocky Mountain Natural Region and the Upper Foothills Natural Subregion;
- The Athabasca River watershed within the Rocky Mountain and Foothills Natural Regions with a boundary of Highway 43 to the Northeast.

Integrated resource management must consider that ecosystems, flows and resources overlap and cross jurisdictional boundaries. As a result, the regional area boundaries will remain flexible and change if the issues and concerns being addressed warrant it. Regional alliances based on economic interests at the community level will be explored within the study boundary.

FIGURE 1: NORTHERN EAST SLOPES SUSTAINABLE RESOURCE AND ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT STRATEGY BOUNDARY



Active, effective consultation was identified as the most important component of a successful regional strategy (Ideas for Integration Workshop, December 1999)

CONSULTATION

Alberta's Commitment to Sustainable Resource and Environmental Management states that "Resource and environmental decisions shall include consultation. This includes ensuring:

- That decisions on resources and environmental management are taken in a provincial context, considering broad public interest, and involve input from those communities and industries that will be most directly affected by them. A role for provincial and national interests through consultation must also be provided."

Desired Outcomes for Consultation

- To identify and understand the perspective and concerns of citizens and communities in the Northern East Slopes area.
- To obtain advice and input that will expand the information and the options upon which decisions are based.
- To anticipate potential problems and address them before conflicts arise through ongoing public consultation.
- To maximize the benefits and minimize the costs of proposed changes by consulting citizens and communities
- To promote awareness and understanding with the general public by creating opportunities to learn about and participate in public involvement processes.

The Government of Alberta supports a "good neighbour" approach. (Proposed Aboriginal Policy Framework, 1999)

Consultation Forums

Government/Aboriginal/Community forums and focus groups, made up of municipal and provincial government, community and sector members with economic, environmental, community and aboriginal interests, will be asked:

- To review, influence, critique and support the interim and final products of the planning process through a variety of public consultation mechanisms such as workshops.

(Note: The Edson and District Sustainable Communities Initiative, is a model to consider for community involvement.)

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Northern East Slopes ERC will support the development of the NES Strategy. This committee includes membership from Alberta Environment, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Alberta Resource Development, Alberta Economic Development, Alberta EUB and Jasper National Park.

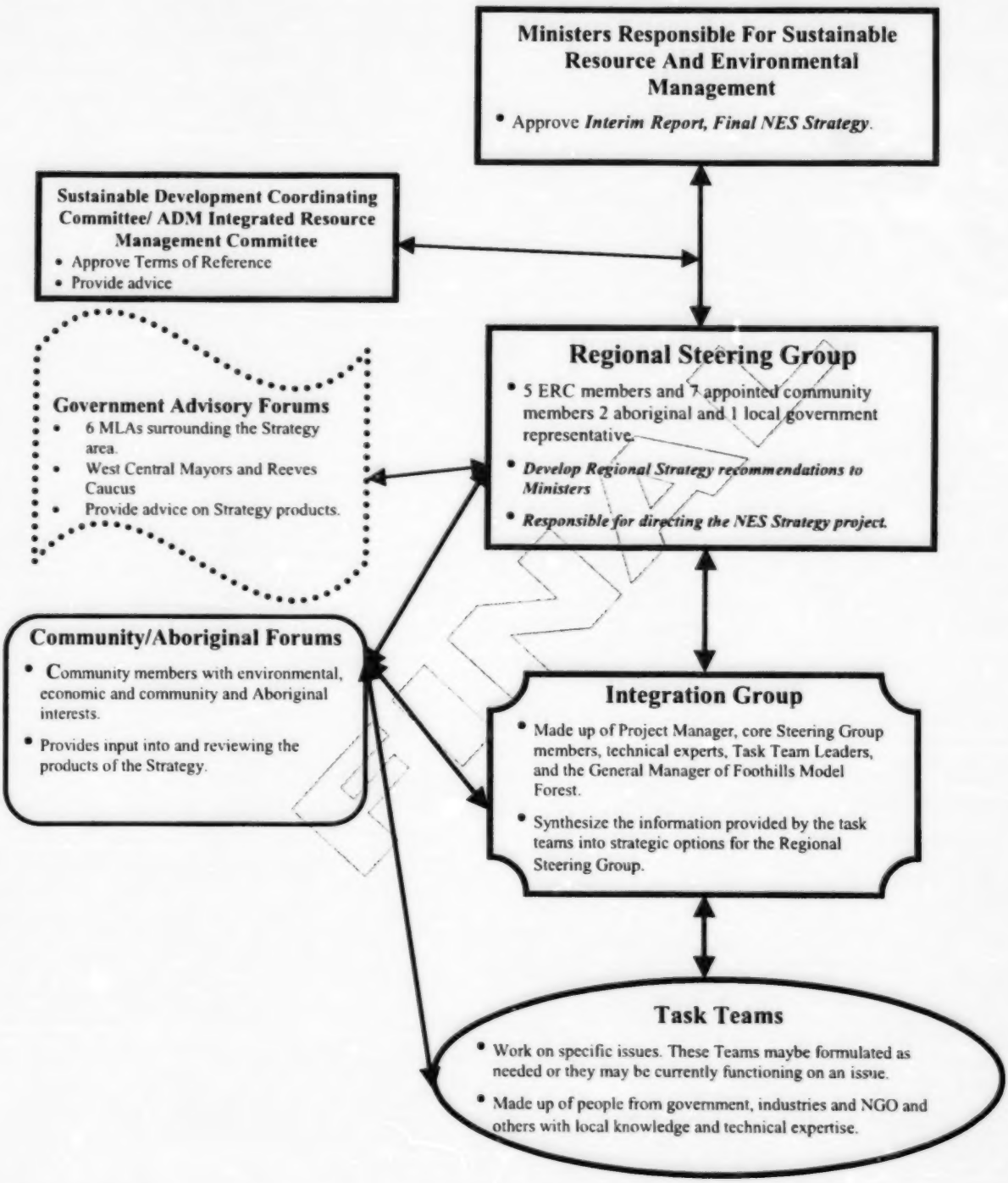
The NES Strategy recommendations will be developed under the direction of a Regional Steering Group for Ministerial approval. The NES Regional Planner will act as Project Manager under the direction of the Steering Group.

The Foothills Model Forest Board has agreed to support the NES Strategy by:

- Providing research data; and technical input on the criteria and indicators for use in the Strategy.
- Reviewing, influencing, critiquing and supporting the interim and final products of the planning process;

The linkages of management and the basic functions of each responsible group are outlined in the following management linkage chart. Appendix I outlines the Roles and Responsibilities of each group in more detail.

FIGURE 2: MANAGEMENT LINKAGE CHART


Ministers Responsible For Sustainable Resource And Environmental Management
• Approve *Interim Report, Final NES Strategy*.
Sustainable Development Coordinating Committee/ ADM Integrated Resource Management Committee
• Approve Terms of Reference
• Provide advice
Government Advisory Forums
• 6 MLAs surrounding the Strategy area.
• West Central Mayors and Reeves Caucus
• Provide advice on Strategy products.
Regional Steering Group
• 5 ERC members and 7 appointed community members 2 aboriginal and 1 local government representative.
• *Develop Regional Strategy recommendations to Ministers*
• *Responsible for directing the NES Strategy project.*
Community/Aboriginal Forums
• Community members with environmental, economic and community and Aboriginal interests.
• Provides input into and reviewing the products of the Strategy.
Integration Group
• Made up of Project Manager, core Steering Group members, technical experts, Task Team Leaders, and the General Manager of Foothills Model Forest.
• Synthesize the information provided by the task teams into strategic options for the Regional Steering Group.
Task Teams
• Work on specific issues. These Teams maybe formulated as needed or they may be currently functioning on an issue.
• Made up of people from government, industries and NGO and others with local knowledge and technical expertise.

APPENDIX I

ROLES AND RESPONSIBLITIES

Provincial MLAs

Local MLAs surrounding the NES Strategy Area will be informed by the RSG at the following milestone stages:

- Regional vision, values, goals, indicators and issue management;
- Interim Report;
- Forecasted scenarios, objectives and strategies to achieve the regional goals; and
- Final NES Strategy.

(The MLAs to consider are; Ivan Strang, Wayne Jacques, Peter Trynchy, Ty Lund, Tom Thurber and Walter Paszkowski.)

MULITIPLE COMMUNITY BASED FORUMS

Municipal Government Forum (NES Mayors and Reeves Council)

Municipal governments would be offered opportunities for input during the following milestone stages:

- Regional vision, values, goals, indicators and issue management;
- Interim Report;
- Forecasted scenarios, objectives and strategies to achieve the regional goals; and
- Final NES Strategy.

The Local Mayors and Reeves Council maybe considered the formal forum for these discussions. Additionally, the Chairperson of this Council and an alternate may be considered a liaison that would also formally sit on the Regional Steering Group.

Aboriginal Forum

Government, industry and the Aboriginal community have a duty to facilitate dialogue and to participate in good faith. Long-term success depends on respect, open communication and co-operation. Therefore, objectives for an Aboriginal forum to participate in the development of the NES Strategy will be:

- Identification of Aboriginal community issues and concerns;
- Identification of Aboriginal sites of interest;
- Development of linkages between the Aboriginal community and the provincial government, industry and municipal governments; and
- Establishment of a forum for consultation.

Community-Based Forums

Communities within the Strategy area include; Hinton, Edson, Grande Cache and Whitecourt. Communities surrounding the Strategy that must be considered are; Jasper, Drayton Valley and Grande Prairie. Each community will be provided opportunities at key stages in the development of the Strategy to review and provide input.

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Regional Steering Group

This group would encompass the 7 Northern East Slopes ERC, 1 North West Boreal ERC member and 9 public individuals that would be identified through appointed to the RSG. The RSG is responsible for receiving input from forums and develop recommendations regarding the NES Strategy to the Ministers responsible for sustainable resource and environmental management.
The RSG will:

- Develop initial regional values, goals and indicators, identify issues and concerns for broader community input;
- Review results of community forums;
- Develop Regional Strategic Issues Management products
- Develop Interim Report;
- Review forecast scenarios for community input;
- Review results of community forums;
- Prepare final NES Strategy Recommendations and any additional reports for Minister consideration and approval; and
- Provide direction to the Integration group regarding public consultation, communication, workplans, budget, planning process management, and data management.

Integration Group

Under the guidance of the RSG the Integration Group (IG) will:

- Prepare background information and documentation for the RSG;
- Manage public consultation and communication;
- Take results of community, municipal and political forums and develop recommendations, identify issues for the RSG;
- Co-ordinate and support Task Teams; and
- Synthesis information and provide strategic options to the RSG.

NES-ERC

Would be responsible for:

- Project Support;
- Facilitate the public process to recommend 9 individuals to the RSG. The ERC will submit the Public Notices, develop the position screening criteria and evaluate the applicants, and finally, make recommendation to the Minister of Environment for appointment;
- Liaison with other ERCs within the Province, specifically the North West Boreal, North East Boreal and Parkland committees; and
- Approve Communications plan and products.

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